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ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN  
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SUBJECT: EXPELLED NGOS MEET WITH USAID AND EMBASSY STAFF

REF: (A) KHARTOUM 319  
(B) KHARTOUM 313  
(C) KHARTOUM 311  
(D) KHARTOUM 306  
(E) KHARTOUM 299

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SUMMARY  
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1. (SBU) SUMMARY: On March 8, the expatriate staff from several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) met with CDA Fernandez, Emboffs, and USAID staff in Khartoum. NGOs provided a summary of GOS harassment, program close-out and ongoing bureaucratic issues to date following the GOS order for their expulsion from Sudan (reftels). Specific cases of harassment of NGO staff will be reported septel. NGO staff appealed to the USG and UN for their advocacy on the current situation and CDA briefed the NGOs on US Embassy, donor and UN actions to date. CDA and emboffs have been in daily contact with the UN and government officials. For now the UN has delayed the departure of the NGOs and the UN will attempt several stop-gap measures to meet IDP needs while conducting a joint assessment in Darfur with the GOS, but soon a more comprehensive plan will be required. The UN Humanitarian Coordinator will likely host a donor meeting in Khartoum in the coming days. Post will propose options septel for Washington input and approval. CDA and Emboffs including USAID plan to travel to Darfur in the coming days.  
END SUMMARY.

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EMBASSY KHARTOUM MEETS WITH AFFECTED NGOS  
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2. (SBU) On March 8 CDA Fernandez, US Embassy staff, and USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA), USAID's Office of Food for Peace (USAID/FFP), and USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (USAID/OTI) staff met with expatriate staff members from the recently expelled organizations Action Contre la Faim (ACF), CHF International, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), PADCO-AECOM, and Save the Children/US (SC/US) to discuss ongoing program close-out, Government of National Unity (GNU) harassment, bureaucratic impediments, and staff morale and overall concerns (harassment of NGO employees and embassy actions to mitigate this are reported septel).

3. (SBU) The CDA noted ongoing USG efforts to engage the GNU and convince the government to reverse, suspend, or delay the expulsions. At the same time the Embassy is conscious of the fact that aggressive USG engagement could lead to additional backlash

from the GNU and escalate the situation. Although the UN, Embassy, international donors and implementing partners continue to request that the Government of National Unity (GNU) reconsider the March 4 and 5 decisions to suspend 13 international and 3 local NGOs, the GNU insists that the decision is irreversible, with many within the regime saying the expulsions are long overdue and that more diplomats and NGOs could be expelled. The GNU however, is willing to consider a modification to the expulsions by agreeing, on a case by case basis, to allow some NGOs to delay their departure long enough to ensure there is no gaps in service. Additionally, following negotiations with the UN the GNU has agreed to return all UN assets that were seized, stop their campaign of intimidation of NGOs and further seizure of assets, and allow NGOs to leave the country. (Note: At a UN/NGO/Donor meeting held on March 9, NGOs continued to report incidents of (personal)asset seizures, staff intimidation and staff being held against their will in Darfur and Khartoum. End Note.) GOS/HAC stressed that the expulsion delay was not a blanket approval for all NGOs to stay longer; rather, the delay would only be for a few days or weeks and would depend on the sector and task following the joint assessment exercise that the UN and HAC will conduct in Darfur starting on Wednesday.

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ASSESSING THE IMPACT IN DARFUR  
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15. (SBU) According to UN officials, the GNU is challenging the UN's statistics on affected population saying the UN is exaggerating the situation and painting a picture that is far too grim. As a result, per an agreement with the UN, the HAC is in the process of forming four joint technical teams to assess the impact on food, water/sanitation, health and shelter sectors. According to the UN, the NGO suspension removes 6,500 humanitarian staff from critical

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programs in Darfur. Although UN agencies affirmed their commitment to cover the critical gaps caused by the suspension, the UN has highlighted that the remaining humanitarian capacity in Sudan is insufficient to meet the significant needs of the affected populations.

16. (SBU) The UN has documented gaps in health, nutrition, shelter, non-food item (NFI), water, sanitation, and hygiene services and presented the information to the GNU. Although only five days old, the decision to expel 40 percent of Darfur's humanitarian staff is already having an impact on the region. According to OCHA and USAID staff, the absence of humanitarian staff is exacerbating a health crisis in several internally displaced person (IDP) camps in South and West Darfur. On March 2, the Darfur Ministry of Health declared a meningitis outbreak in Kalma camp, near Nyala, South Darfur. As of March 4, Mdecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) had reported 32 meningitis cases in Kalma camp, including four fatalities. Although MSF/Netherlands (MSF/H) had planned to conduct a vaccination campaign targeting 130,000 individuals in and around Nyala town, the expulsion of MSF/H staff leaves the IDP and host population vulnerable to meningitis and without health care. Prior to the expulsion, MSF/France (MSF/F) had also planned a vaccination campaign for 40,000 individuals in Jebel Marra, West Darfur, particularly near Nertiti town and Thur camp, where MSF/F staff registered 17 cases of meningitis since early February. Meningitis is highly contagious, particularly in overcrowded IDP camps during the January to April dry season. However, a meningitis patient receiving rapid and appropriate treatment has a mortality rate of 5 to 10 percent, whereas an untreated meningitis patient has a 50 percent mortality rate.

18. (SBU) ACF, CARE, IRC, Mercy Corps, Oxfam and Solidarits were the main partners in the Water and Sanitation Sector in Darfur and North Sudan. Following their departure, some Darfur camps are at risk of being without clean water supplies by March 9. The largest camp without water may be Kalma camp where CARE and Oxfam provided the service to the camp's 92,000 residents until the March 4 expulsions. Although UNICEF continues to support the GNU Office of Water and Environmental Sanitation (WES) in Kalma camp, WES is beyond its operational capacity and unable to provide enough clean water for the IDP camp. USAID staff also caution that additional camps may experience water shortages due to the departure of CARE International, the IRC, and Oxfam, which were the most significant,

and in some cases the only water providers to several South Darfur IDP camps, including Al Salam, Bielel, Dereig, El Sereif, Kass, Otash, and Sekele camps. If the gaps in services are not filled in a timely manner, the risk of acute water diarrhea and cholera outbreak will be high.

¶9. (SBU) Preliminary analysis by USAID/OFDA indicates that the NGO suspension impacts approximately 54 percent of USAID/OFDA's current programs and beneficiaries throughout Darfur. The results vary across each of the Darfur states, with the suspension of 36 percent of USAID/OFDA's South Darfur programs, 61 percent of USAID/OFDA's North Darfur programs, and 73 percent of USAID/OFDA's West Darfur programs.

¶10. (SBU) On March 6, USAID/FFP met with the UN World Food Program (WFP) Darfur Coordinator in Khartoum to discuss the impact of the NGO expulsions on the massive food aid operation in Darfur. WFP relies heavily on its NGO partners for food aid distribution to two and half to more than three million people per month, depending on the time of year. Based on its agreements with the expelled NGOs for the six-month period of January-June, WFP estimates that up to 1.1 million individuals in Darfur are at risk of not receiving their monthly general food distribution now that four key partners (CARE, SC/US, Solidarites, and ACF) have been expelled. There is no question that the NGO expulsions will result in major gaps in the delivery of emergency food assistance, particularly in West Darfur. WFP highlighted that West Darfur will experience a more severe service disruption than either North or South Darfur because implementing partners CARE and SC/US delivered food to 70 percent of the beneficiaries, approximately 700,000 people, in that state. In addition, approximately 5,000 malnourished children and pregnant/lactating women will be without critical supplementary feeding programs.

¶11. (SBU) To put the scale of this crisis into perspective, the expelled NGOs implemented approximately 40 percent of WFP's monthly general food distribution caseload and 50 percent of WFP's supplementary feeding programs. The UN and donors are extremely concerned that the inevitable disruption in delivery of food

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assistance to the scale that is necessary to support nearly three million IDPs as well as other conflict-affected populations, coinciding with the loss of water and health services, will result in new waves of population displacements. Of particular concern is West Darfur, where the potential is high for movements of large numbers of people into West Darfur urban areas or cross-border displacement to the eastern Chad refugee camps. WFP is working on options for conducting a one-off emergency food distribution through the Food Relief Committees (FRCs) that have been established in many, but not all, of the camps. WFP cautions that this will be extremely difficult undertaking with nearly no guarantee of accountability given the loss of many of the NGO-managed beneficiary lists (which have either been destroyed or seized by the GOS) coupled with the low capacity of the FRCs, some of which are newly formed. WFP reiterated that this would be a one-off distribution of a two-month general ration and is not/not a longer term solution. It is also not a solution for covering the gaps in the emergency nutrition programs, which require significant professional oversight and accompanying health, water, sanitation, and hygiene activities

¶12. (SBU) Of particular note is the loss of the Non-Food Item (NFI) Common Pipeline, previously organized by Care International. The pipeline represents 85 percent of the NFI and emergency shelter items distributed in northern Sudan, and populations affected by recent conflict will not have access to the resources required. After the expulsion of CARE, National Security took control of all the NFI warehouses in Darfur, Khartoum and El Obeid. JLC is currently in negotiation with the HAC to have them turnover the warehouses to JLC as the manager of the NFI Common Pipeline. UNJLC remains extremely concerned regarding the provision of shelter because the expulsion of CHF International reduces the number of shelters provided in Darfur during 2009 by more than 44,000. The lack of coverage for conflict-affected populations continues to be of high concern, particularly for the populations in Muhajeria and Shearia in South Darfur, and the new arrivals to Zam Zam camp in

North Darfur that are without humanitarian partners to support immediate needs.

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NGO CONCERNS OVER WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT  
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¶13. (SBU) Overall, NGO staff expressed general dismay and concern for the future of humanitarian programs, beneficiaries, and local staff in Darfur and in Sudan generally. The NGO representatives who met with the CDA expressed great anxiety regarding future assistance measures, access, and GNU machinations. NGOs expressed great concern about IDP camps without water supplies and the potential for increased conflict, particularly between the Targem, Zaghawa, and Fur ethnic groups currently sheltering in Kass camp in South Darfur. NGOs noted that IDPs may react violently to a dearth of assistance and the Sudanese government may launch a counter-offensive to put down the riled IDPs. Looking beyond Darfur, meeting participants highlighted a nearly immediate impact on the Three Areas and wondered how long the Comprehensive Peace Agreement would survive without the carrots of NGO-delivered peace dividends and development assistance.

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COMMENT  
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¶14. (SBU) The immediate challenge of the humanitarian community is to try to prevent significant deaths and conflict as a result of a decrease in services. There is significant risk that a lack of water, food and shelter will lead to increased insecurity, particularly in large and volatile camps such as Kalma (90,000 IDPs) and Gereida (130,000 IDPs) and an increased risk of disease, malnutrition and deaths. For the NGOs that are allowed to operate, and who may be asked to provide additional support to fill the gaps of departing NGOs, there is hesitancy for greater involvement, due to a concern that such activities might be interpreted or exploited by the GNU as supporting the Sudanese government's decision to expel NGOs. In addition, there are as yet no assurances from the GNU for the security of NGO staff, and previous assurances from the GNU have meant little.

¶15. (SBU) Therefore, if the remaining NGOs are asked to pick up the slack by donors, the UN and donors will need to negotiate with the GOS on a comprehensive package of security and operational assurances. According to UNAMID and UN officers, AU Chairman Ping

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intends to deliver the message to President Bashir March 9 that the expulsions must stop, the departure of the expelled NGOs must be delayed, and the GOS must work with the donors and the UN to mitigate the effects of a possible disaster. Arab League SG Amr Musa was supposed to have delivered a similar message to President Bashir August 7, but President Bashir proceeded to crow about the expulsions during a visit to El Fasher August 8. Musa reportedly warned Bashir that he had a potential PR disaster on his hands but Bashir apparently is listening only to the elements of his regime that choose to minimize the role of NGOs and the UN in Darfur. However, quietly behind the scenes the GNU has agreed to allow the joint field assessment to proceed while delaying the expulsion of the NGOs, so there is still a chance that cooler heads will prevail in seeking a solution to the impending humanitarian crisis.

¶16. (SBU) In the coming weeks, the international community could be faced with a humanitarian crisis in Darfur that we are currently ill equipped to respond to. Some donors and NGOs are cautioning against moving too quickly to attempt to fill the gap, although we must weigh this against the humanitarian impact on IDPs. If a negotiated plan with the GOS can be reached in the coming weeks (with a combination of UN, NGO, and GOS assistance), it should no longer be business as usual in Darfur. Issues such as security, access, bureaucratic impediments, attacks against NGOs, harassment and intimidation must be addressed. Humanitarian agencies in Darfur have long been obstructed by government, but the recent expulsions demonstrate an unprecedented abuse of power and lack of respect for rule of law and humanitarian principles. Combined with increased

insecurity, carjacking and break-ins, the threshold for Darfur becoming inoperable for many agencies is undoubtedly close.

¶17. (SBU) It is also possible that the GOS will not allow a sustained role by donor-supported NGOs, even in the face of a humanitarian crisis in Darfur. In such a scenario, the international community may need to declare a disaster in Darfur and authorize the UN to take over humanitarian assistance. However we are still in the early phases of this political/humanitarian crisis and we need to see how the government behaves over the next week before taking precipitous action that could escalate the crisis unnecessarily. We have been in daily contact with moderate regime officials and will meet again tomorrow with GNU officials to urge restraint and a negotiated solution to the crisis that allows for continued robust humanitarian assistance. Post will provide septel our consolidated proposals for a way forward out of the current crisis, which will address both assistance needs and a political response. It is likely that the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Khartoum will host a donor meeting in the coming days to seek our input and we will need input from Washington prior to this meeting.

FERNANDEZ